

Message Text

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AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG

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AMEMBASSY REYKJAVIK

AMEMBASSY ROME

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: MILI, MARR, CA, UK

SUBJ: GOOSE BAY: UK VIEWS RE CONVERSION OF GOOSE BAY TO
NATO BASE

1. SUMMARY: UK OFFICER HIGHLY FAVORABLE TO IDEA OF
GOOSE BAY AS NATO BASE WHERE PILOT TRAINING COULD BE
ACCOMPLISHED AT FRACTION THE COST OF DOING SO IN EUROPE.
EMBASSY SUGGESTS US MIGHT WISH PURSUE THIS IDEA SINCE SUPPORT
OF GOOSE BAY BY EUROPEAN NATO NATIONS WOULD REDUCE
COSTS TO U.S. END SUMMARY.

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2. IN THE COURSE OF AN INFORMAL CONVERSATION BETWEEN AIR COMMODOR KIT CARSON, DEFENSE ADVISOR, UK HIGH COMMISSION AND EMBOFF, CARSON COMMENTED ON NEGOTIATIONS BETWEEN CANADIAN MINISTRY OF TRANSPORT, CANADIAN DND, USAF, AND RAF REGARDING USAF PULL OUT FROM GOOSE BAY. CARSON HAS REPRESENTED RAF IN THOSE NEGOTIATIONS AND HAS ADVISED GOC RE RAF REQUIREMENTS FOR IT TO CONTINUE MAKING USE OF THE BASE.

2. CARSON PARTICULARLY COMMENTED ON PROPOSAL THAT GOOSE BAY BE DESIGNATED AS A NATO BASE. HE WAS VERY ENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT THE LATTER POSSIBILITY, AND POINTED OUT THAT AIR SPACE WAS BECOMING INCREASINGLY "DEAR", PARTICULARLY IN EUROPE. HE HAD RECEIVED INDICATIONS FROM MANY OF HIS EUROPEAN COLLEAGUES THAT A BASE SUCH AS GOOSE BAY WOULD BE HIGHLY DESIRABLE SINCE THEY NEED A PLACE TO TRAIN THEIR PERSONNEL IN THE LATEST SOPHISTICATED AIRCRAFT. WITH SO MANY USING THE F-16 IT WOULD BE IDEAL TO HAVE A NUMBER OF THOSE AIRCRAFT BASED AT GOOSE, AND NATO COUNTRIES WOULD SIMPLY FLY IN THEIR CREWS AND USE THEM ON A PERMANENT ROTATING SCHEDULE. COSTS IN EUROPE WERE EXCEEDINGLY HIGH TOO; TO DEVISE SUCH A SYSTEM COULD EASILY HALVE THE PRICE OF TRAINING A PILOT, AND THAT KIND OF ARGUMENT WAS HARD TO BEAT. CERTAINLY THE RAF WAS VERY MUCH IN FAVOR OF SUCH A MOVE AND PLEASED WITH ITS CURRENT PROGRAM THERE.

3. IT WAS HIS IMPRESSION THAT THE GOC IS PURSUING THIS IDEA VIGOROUSLY, ALTHOUGH IT IS ALSO CONSIDERING COLD LAKE AS AN ALTERNATIVE SITE TO SEEK DESIGNATION AS A NATO BASE. THE PROBLEM, HE SAID, WAS THAT THE POOR CANADIAN DEFENSE FORCES WERE SO MALIGNED AND BEATEN DOWN BY THEIR POLITICAL MASTERS, THAT HE WONDERED IF THEY WOULD BE ABLE TO ACCOMPLISH SUCH AN OBJECTIVE. IT WAS, THEREFORE, A WISE MOVE ON THE PART OF THE USAF (AND RAF) TO KEEP A TOE IN AT BOOSE BAY, SINCE IT GAVE DND A COUPLE OF POTENT ALLIES IN THE STRUGGLE TO MAINTAIN SOME SORT OF MILITARY ESTABLISHMENT IN CANADA. HE HOPED THAT IF THE IDEA OF CONVERTING GOOSE BAY TO A NATO BASE CATCHES ON, THE CANADIANS WOULD MAKE SUCH A LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PROPOSAL FORMALLY TO NATO HEADQUARTERS. HE SUSPECTED THAT NATO WOULD NOT TURN IT DOWN.

4. COMMENT: THE VIEWS OF THE UK IN THIS MATTER ARE INTERESTING SINCE OBVIOUSLY THEY ARE ONE EUROPEAN COUNTRY WHICH CAN PROVIDE NATO ALLIES WITH COST FIGURES AND AN EVALUATION OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF TRAINING INFORMATION WHICH COULD CONVINCE THEM TO SHARE IN THE MANAGE-

MENT OF GOOSE BAY.

5. HOWEVER, THE CANADIAN MINISTRY OF TRANSPORTATION (MOT), THE BASES'S MANAGER, IS FOLLOWING ITS OWN COURSE OF ACTION, AND IF THE ISSUE DRAGS ON TOO LONG, MOT MAY WELL END UP SPOILING THE SOUP; FOR EXAMPLE, IT IS ALREADY TALKING ABOUT TEARING UP SOME OF THE RUN-WAYS, REMOVING ARREST BARRIERS AND CLOSING THE CONTRO TOWER, WHICH WOULD PUT AN END TO THE USE OF THE AIRPORT BY THE MILITARY. IT MIGHT BE SUGGESTED THAT THE US PURSUE THIS IDEA SOMEWHAT MORE AGGRESSIVELY, PERHAPS IN NATO HEADQUARTERS, AND PERHAPS WITH BI-LATERAL INITIATIVES. CERTAINLY THE US STANDS TO GAIN, SINCE COSTS FOR MAINTENANCE OF GOOSE BAY COULD THEN BE SPREAD AMONG A NUMBER OF ALLIES. JOHNSON

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